

Alternative Business Structures - Land Of Opportunity

Gary Ross September 1, 2011



Tel : 0191 4420282

Press 1 to "Find Me"



Gary Ross is a Unified Comms Business Executive for IT Professional Services Ltd , the converged communications specialist in the North East of England who partners with ShoreTel for their IP range.

Land of Opportunity : *With thanks to the original article creator, Steven Bancroft (legal editor at Barker Brooks Media)*

Change in the legal services marketplace is upon us, but Alternative Business Structures can be just as much an opportunity as a threat. contact ITPS to see how we can help ?

Later this year the time for talking will finally be over. Ever since the publication of the Legal Services Act four years ago, there have been varying predictions on the scale and impact of Alternative Business Structures (ABS).

Some commentators have painted a bleak picture for current providers with the likes of Tesco, ASDA, Virgin and the AA all queuing up to take advantage of deregulation which will allow nonlegals to either own law firms or hold management positions therein. However, others have suggested a less dramatic impact on the market with a few well-known consumer brands – banks, estate agents and so on – adding legal services to their existing offerings.

Nobody quite knows what will happen in October (or whenever the individual ABS regulators are given the green light from Parliament to begin the roll out process). New entrants will appear, but it may be a gradual process spread over 18 / 24 months with some of the UK's best known consumer brands analysing the marketplace and the successes or otherwise of the early pioneers before taking tentative first steps themselves.

It is also likely that existing sectors will evolve to offer more 'one-stop shop' type services, with the likes of claims management companies (CMCs) who, in the personal injury world, having brought the work in themselves may choose to start handling the legal aspect of the claim rather than send it out to a panel of solicitors.

Future challenge

In whatever form, and to what extent, new entrants arrive in the market is still open to debate but the simple fact is that now has to be the time to prepare for increased competition.

Therefore the question that should be foremost in the minds of everybody from a managing partner of a major law firm to a business development manager at a CMC is how will these new entrants compete? What skills, ideas, initiatives and systems will they bring to what is already a crowded marketplace in the hope of attracting the consumer?

Sitting back and doing nothing is simply not an option as we enter what will be a crossroads in the evolution of the legal services industry.

Firstly, you can bet your bottom dollar that these new entrants or new-look existing providers will have slick Case Management Software and [Unified Communication](#) systems in place supported by specialist infrastructure organisations.

The simple reason for this is that they have already identified the commoditised areas of law where process and automation are incredibly important, like personal injury or conveyancing. By utilising the [latest technology](#) they strongly believe they will be able to compete by offering fixed cost packages to the consumer. They will also be user-friendly and understand the principle of placing the consumer at the heart of the process in order to first attract and then retain their business.

Opportunity knocks

The environment going forward might be tougher, but with challenge comes great opportunity. Now is the time to analyse what you are doing and ask yourself is it the most [effective way of working](#) ? Make the most of your own slick software&systems and harness the full potential. However, if you've realised that the system you have in place isn't up to the challenge of basics like automating administration, reducing costs and providing transparency for your clients by allowing them to view how cases are progressing (this will certainly be a minimum requirement!) then you need to [act fast](#).

The strongest will survive, so get your ducks in a row and ensure you have good systems and procedures in place. But most importantly ensure you have employee buy-in to what you are trying to achieve. Together, and with the [right tools](#) at their fingertips, they will be the ones who can really make a difference to your performance.



About IT Professional Services Ltd

ITPS, are a main ICT solution provider in the development of [Hosted, Business Continuity, Network Infrastructure, VoIP](#) and [Unified Communications](#) solutions which leverages its Data Centre technologies to deliver industry-leading comms provision and applications to businesses of any size with employees in any location. We offer integrated business communications and private cloud computing services that are designed to meet the highest levels of availability, reliability and scalability. Increasingly, businesses are finding they can reduce costs, improve productivity, and be positioned competitively for the future by choosing ITPS for their mission critical, communications and computing needs. For additional information, visit www.it-ps.com or connect with ITPS on Twitter.



About ShoreTel

ShoreTel, Inc. (NASDAQ: SHOR) is the provider of brilliantly simple [Unified Communication \(UC\) solutions](#) based on its award-winning [IP business phone system](#). We offer organizations of all sizes integrated, voice, video, data, and mobile communications on an open, distributed IP architecture that helps significantly reduce the complexity and costs typically associated with other solutions. The feature-rich ShoreTel UC system offers the [lowest total cost of ownership](#) (TCO) and the [highest customer satisfaction in the industry](#), in part because it is easy to deploy, manage, scale and use. Increasingly, companies around the world are finding a competitive edge by replacing business-as-usual with new thinking, and choosing ShoreTel to handle their integrated business communication. ShoreTel is based in Sunnyvale, California, and has regional offices in Austin, Texas; United Kingdom; Sydney, Australia; and Singapore. www.shoretel.com

